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ABSTRACT

Pupils in the middle school can be motivated to enjoy and write haiku poetry. A student teacher taught two lessons to a sixth grade class in haiku writing. First, the student teacher read three haikus aloud to students. After discovering the characteristics of a haiku from two models, the class as a whole wrote a haiku based on slides from their social studies unit on the Middle East. Next, students wrote a haiku in large groups, and then with a peer. Students seemed thoroughly involved in their writing, and interest and frequency of participation were high. Finally, students wrote haikus as a homework challenge--and 22 of 25 students brought their poems to class the next day. Writing haikus can be one means of having learners develop their own ideas and put them into print. (SR)

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MIDDLE SCHOOL PUPILS WRITE HAIKU

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Pupils in the middle school can be motivated to enjoy and write haiku poetry. Stimulating learning opportunities assist in setting the stage for writing haiku. The teacher then must guide learners to develop background information and use the subject matter to write haiku. An integrated curriculum may be stressed here in that subject matter can come from diverse academic areas. Pupils who are not able to hear syllables within words may wish to write a different form of verse. Literature teachers do emphasize syllabication as one approach for pupils to use in identifying unknown words. Skills in syllabication may be used equally so in writing haiku.

Writing Haiku

Haiku poetry is fascinating to many pupils. One reason being that pupils can experiment with words to notice which has the correct number of syllables to harmonize with five syllables for the first line, seven for the second line, and five for the third line in a haiku poem. A brain storming approach may be used to have pupils keep suggesting words for each of the lines of a large group composed haiku poem. When brain storming is emphasized in large group instruction, the words presented by individual pupils should not be minimized. Generating ideas is of major importance when brainstorming is stressed to obtain words in the writing of haiku.

The writer has supervised student teachers (ST's) for approximately thirty years. One ST did an excellent job of teaching two lessons to a sixth grade class in haiku writing. This approach will now be discussed. The ST read three haiku's to learners with quality stress, pitch, and juncture (See "An Introduction to Haiku" by Harold Anderson – Doubleday Publishing Company). Eye contact with learners was very strong during the oral reading. Pupils were seemingly very attentive

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when listening to the reading of haiku poetry. Next in sequence, the ST pulled up the world map so that learners could see two haiku poems printed on the chalk board in neat manuscript style. The first poem was read together by all twenty five pupils in the classroom. This poem by the Japanese poet Basho written in the thirteenth century read as follows;

First cold showers fall
Even little monkey wants
A wee coat of straw.

Each pupil counted on his/her fingers if the poem being read followed the five- seven- five sequence of the number of syllables per line for a haiku poem. The teacher read orally the second poem by Hashin, also an early writer of Haiku in Japan. This poem read as follows;

All sky disappears
The earth's land has gone away
Still the snowflakes fall.

The ST asked pupils how many syllables there were in each one of these three lines. The ST guided learners to verify the number of syllables per line of each poem as a check mark was placed above each syllable. Conformity and creativity are in evidence in the writing of haiku. Thus the number of syllables per line of a 5-7-5 sequence is salient; however the novelty and uniqueness of content and ideas is even more important.

Learners were now ready to write a haiku within the large group setting of 25 pupils. They were studying a unit in social studies on "Visiting the Middle East." The ST had visited Jordan, Israel, and the West Bank the previous summer and showed selected clear slides to pupils on East Jerusalem. For now, pupils viewed the slides with very few ST comments. They could ask questions and make comments on the

contents of the slides voluntarily and freely. This open ended approach was emphasized so that pupils would need to interpret, synthesize, and evaluate visuals in a creative manner.

The resulting haiku from the slide presentation (twelve slides were shown) was the following;

The Walled City (Title)
Many people walk
Narrow streets with open shops
Colorful indeed.

The ST felt the group was a little large in number in developing a haiku. Pupils individually needed to have ample opportunities to present ideas for the haiku. The ST and the regular teacher divided the 25 pupils into two groups, with twelve and thirteen pupils in each. The ST lead a discussion pertaining to questions pupils had on the slide content discussed above. The ST reviewed the slides visually with the twelve pupils (later, the ST and the regular teacher changed in group supervision). Much enthusiasm was in evidence as learners desired to write a completely different haiku based on the same slide content. The ST printed the content on the chalk board as it was presented by learners. The following haiku resulted;

Holy Places (Title)
The Dome of the Rock
The Western Wall stands nearby
Devout people pray.

Problems Involved in Writing Haiku

When evaluating large group and committee endeavors in the writing of haiku, the following problems were discussed with the ST;

1. frequency of participation is rather low when emphasizing the class as a whole in developing a haiku. Even with twelve learners in a committee, opportunities to participate in presenting ideas are

somewhat limited.

2. pupils who actively participated in suggesting ideas for poetry content tend to like large group and committee work.

3. A few pupils had difficulties in thinking of contributions involving words with an exact number of syllables. These learners could be encouraged to write other forms of verse where syllabication is not involved. Perhaps, too, learners develop syllabication skills as they practice writing an increasing number of haiku.

4. time on task was a problem for the same two pupils in the large group as well as committee endeavor.

5. an adequate amount of assistance must be provided for pupils engaged in the writing of poetry. The assistance should emphasize guidance in clarification of ideas as well as alternative words and phrases that could be used in writing. Flexible use of time is necessary so that learners can think critically and creatively in the writing of poems.

Next, the ST in sequence stressed a peer approach in writing haiku. Thus two pupils harmonized their motivation and effort in poetry writing. The ST had each team of two members choose which topic to write on. Prior to the actual writing of each haiku, the ST discussed a few structural ideas pertaining to what pupils had studied recently in literature, science, social studies, and mathematics. The majority of pupils chose to write a haiku on the Middle East area of the world. The ST felt the following was the best haiku written by two pupils;

Gates on the Wall (Title)
Eight gates in the wall
Lead into the Old City
Moslems, Jews, Christians

There were many excellent haiku written by pupils in groups of two. Interest and frequency of participation were indeed high. The ST and the regular teacher were very busy individuals in attempting to assist the separate teams when the creative writing activity was being emphasized.

Both the ST and the regular teacher challenged pupils to write a

haiku as homework. The challenge was strictly voluntary for pupils to complete. Surprisingly, 22 of 25 pupils wrote the haiku as homework. These 22 brought their poems to class the next day. The ST picked which she felt was the best written haiku by an individual pupil. The following haiku was then shown to the writer;

Jerusalem (Title)
Narrow crowded streets
People from all nations there
Small shops selling wares.

In Conclusion

Learners can indeed become highly fascinated with the writing of haiku. Readiness fir the writing of haiku is a necessity. Thus concrete, semiconcrete, and abstract materials of instruction may be used to provide background information to pupils prior to the writing of haiku. Much thought goes into the harmonizing of words with the number of syllables needed per line to provide for a 5- 7- 5 progression for each of three lines. Creative thinking is certainly involved in writing haiku since novelty and uniqueness of ideas are needed.

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